1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

some pulling on their stubby little pipes and watching the men. As the men smoke, they may pass the pipe from mouth to mouth, but not so the women.

Tobacco (*akaya*) is a great vehicle for sociability whether in the pipe or in the form of snuff. 'Snuffing is held to clear the head, to clarify the thought, to enlighten the eyes, to sharpen the hearing, and comfort the heart.'[1] 'Taking a pinch of snuff, between the forefinger and the thumb, is unknown . . . and would be considered . . . very unsatisfactory. . . . They pour about a teaspoonful into the palm of the hand, and burying their . . . nostrils in the peppery mixture snort it up loudly, aided by a rotary motion of the half-closed hand.'[2]

Beer (*ocimbombo*) is of even greater importance. Its place has long been threatened by such drinks as the stronger beer made from emmer wheat (*ekundi*), mead (*ingundu* and *ocasa*), and imported rum. Within the past thirty or forty years the Ovimbundu have themselves learned to distil rum (*okacipembe*) from sweet potatoes, sugar-cane, pumpkins, &c., and although the industry is illegal, it has grown to great proportions and nothing now seems able to stop it. It is the widespread use of this strong drink, with its concomitant evils, which is to-day the greatest enemy of the social life.

The dance is probably the most important element in the social life of the village. The Ovimbundu have many different dances and they dance on every occasion and on the slightest provocation. I have collected thirty songs to accompany dances. About three-fourths of them are sometimes used at funerals or at other ceremonial occasions, some of them are for more frivolous purposes, and most of those which are used for ceremonies are used at other times also. It is not for nothing that an Umbundu equivalent of the proverb 'Strike while the iron is hot', runs as follows:

Nda wa mõlã oñoma, pituka:
When you see a drum, dance:
Oñoma ka yi mudwã luvali.
A drum may not be seen twice.

During one of my visits to Ngendo there was an important funeral with much dancing at Ndumba, just across the valley. At

[1] Tucker, *Drums in the Darkness* (Toronto and New York; Doran, 1927), p. 38.
[2] Monteiro, *Angola and the River Congo*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1875), vol. ii, p. 271.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

535 that time I got several of the accompanying songs, the texts of which I hope may be published later. At this time I wish only to point out the important place in the social life of the village which the dance occupies, with reference both to ceremonial and to [821] recreation. Whenever 'the moon makes a basket' (*osaï yi tunga ohumba*),[1] there is apt to be a great urge for rhythmic expression. [533] The drums begin to throb, the leader's voice is heard in invitation:

We-lele, we-lele wiya,
Oh light ones, oh light ones, come,
Usiki woñoma Kaluyua.
The beater of the drum (is) Kaluyua.

Then the dancers reply with the same words as a refrain:

We-lele, we-lele wiya,
Usiki woñoma Kaluyua.

The invitation is not given in vain. More and more feet join the shuffling, stamping rhythm, more voices join the chorused invitation; the throbbing mounts as perhaps another drummer or two join in, and soon other songs supersede the invitation now no longer necessary. Dance follows dance, each with its appropriate song, running the gamut of the emotions from ribaldry to pathos, according to the dancers' moods. The dancing will continue nearly all the night and may be resumed on the three or four [527] subsequent nights. After the harvest is gathered and there are no immediate agricultural labours, and if there happens to be little or no government work required at the time or in the region, dances may begin of an afternoon and last through two or three days and nights.

524 There are a number of games involving either agility or quick wits, or both, which are also played on moonlight nights, both by children and by adolescents. The adults do not join in except in some games which involve dancing. A simple one called *Ka limbua limbua* (Not forgotten) is played by either a large or small group. The children have many games. One which is played either by day or by night, called either *Cimbamba co lia* (The night hawk ate him) or *Mai* (Mother) *Cisangu*, has been fully described by Hambly,[2] with the transcription of its songs arranged by Dr. Herzog.

[1] When the moon is full it 'makes a basket', i.e. is large and round like a field-basket.

[2] Hambly, op. cit., p. 216 f.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

178 936 of marriage through all these changes, whether with or without the trial marriage, is a testimony to the vitality of their culture.

883 Young people of the same age-groups are thrown constantly more closely together during adolescence in all their activities and in all aspects of their life. Strengthening of the age-groups is therefore to be expected. New names are taken at this time and the names received at birth discarded so far as possible. Boys used to go off together on hunts, on trading expeditions, &c. The girls work more individually in the fields, but are together in such communal labours as harvests. The preparation of food allows them more sociability and they have the additional advantage of congregating in kitchens not only for meals, but for the night as well. Ceremonial and social occasions are always opportunities for those of the same age-groups to get together. There is a limited amount of fagging of the immediately inferior age-group, but it is not institutionalized save where initiation camps have entered the picture.

883 535 533 Folk-lore, music, and the dance have very important roles in the education of the young. The Bantu are probably among the most naturally musical of all peoples and the Ovimbundu are perhaps excelled by few other Bantu. Their vocal ability is certainly superior to that of several of their immediate neighbours. Many of their songs are sung in connexion with dances. Other musical forms are road and work songs. Dancing is much enjoyed during adolescence but by no means only at that time, for it is learned in early childhood, very soon after walking, and continued on through life as long as the man or woman can get about unaided. It is a great sight to see toddlers, hardly more than able to walk, climb down off their mothers' backs and try a few steps at dancing; or again, to see a wizened and white-haired old man or woman step out and execute a *pas seul* on some ceremonial occasion. The adolescents, however, enjoy their dancing most, and they are the originators of most of the new steps and new dances which appear from time to time. The dance is of great importance to Umbundu life: social, educational, and ceremonial.

It remains to speak briefly of two institutions, neither of which is practised extensively throughout the country, nor does either seem to be a typical or integral part of Umbundu culture. These are the institutions of initiation at puberty, and the communistic order of the *vakuacisoko* (lit. 'those of the set').

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

have for several years agreed to be the most effective. This is the method whereby babies learn their own language, a method which competent African teachers can easily understand and have adapted with good results.

Physical education and recreation would seem to be a simple matter among a people which spends so large a proportion of its time in out-of-doors occupations and one which, again, has almost universally good posture, and a large proportion of which is of good physique. Comparing the Ovimbundu with their neighbours to the north, the Ovimbundu are greatly superior both in physique and in posture. Umbundu forms of physical education are responsible at least in part. Carrying loads on the head, which is done by all ages and both sexes, has also had undoubted influence. Most important of all is the dance. The dance is very good physical exercise but it is much more than that. It is more than mere recreation. 'The dance is in most primitive societies an important factor in maintaining group solidarity.'[1] This is certainly true of the Ovimbundu. There is nothing which can take its place. It is doubtful whether the solidarity of any group of Ovimbundu can be firmly established or long maintained without the dance. They do adopt various foreign forms of recreation, but the dance meets a deeper need. Whatever new exercises and games may be introduced the physical educator cannot afford to neglect indigenous forms.

Music is of great importance to the Ovimbundu. The Church and mission schools have made much use of this musical ability and beat. The great choirs which give such pleasing renditions of European classical and sacred music would do credit to schools or colleges in any part of the world.[2] Less use has been made of native music but it is still sung, and some teachers have taken real interest in it. Not having described the Umbundu musical forms it is not possible to extend this evaluation. However, it must be noted that European music has been supplied with Umbundu words, and very successfully in some instances. Contrary to the predictions of several authorities, the result, most emphatically, is not 'a kind of musical pidgin'.[3]

[1] Krige, 1936, op. cit., p. 336.

[2] See article by Elizabeth Scattergood Chalmers, 'The Music at the Jubilee', *Missionary Herald*, 1930, pp. 335–8.

[3] See E. M. von Hornbostel, 'African Negro Music', *Africa*, 1928, pp. 30–62. He offers some interesting suggestions on the use of drums. His conclusions on

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

(Plate XLV, Fig. 2). The house of bows for holding sacred relics will be described in connection with religion (Plate XLVI, Fig. 1).

In former days there used to be a hard mud floor for dancing, centrally placed in the village.

In the center of the village is the communal house where all men, and boys over four years of age, gather to eat their food, which is sent by the women. This *onjango* is the place of assembly for discussion of village affairs. A house of this kind at Bailundu is circular in form with a diameter of seventeen feet (Plate XLVIII, Fig. 1). In the middle of the *onjango* are stones forming a fireplace. In another such house there were jawbones of oxen. These were suspended from the walls as tokens of the payment of fines. There is no communal house for females. In some villages there is a common kraal for cattle.

The king's compound usually contains:

(1) The king's house, which invariably has a separate sleeping room.

(2) A house and kitchen for each of his wives.

(3) A tomb for the burial of kings and their wives.

(4) The house of bows for staffs, bows, mats, and tobacco-pipes of dead chiefs.

(5) A house of meditation for the king (Plate LXXXIX, Fig. 1).

(6) Pens for pigs and chickens.

The guest houses (Plate XLVIII, Fig. 2) that I have seen were not in the king's compound. Granaries, which are conspicuous in every village, have been mentioned in connection with food supply (Plate XLIV, Fig. 1). Each house has its own granary. I have noticed garbage pits containing corn husks and refuse from sweet potatoes, but there is as a rule no organized scheme for disposing of refuse; dogs and pigs are the scavengers. There is no particular place for defecation; people use the bush.

Every man has a knowledge of house-building. Women do not actually build, but, along with the children, they pour water into the clay pit and carry clay to the men who are plastering the walls. Ngonga says, "People would be surprised to see a woman building a house. They would call her a he-woman." Men help one another in house-building by giving reciprocal service for which there is a gift of food and beer.

A deep rectangular clay pit is made as close to the house as possible, and the children thoroughly enjoy puddling the clay with their

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

rate hut is provided as a kitchen. In some dark corner of the hut there is likely to be a sitting hen or a bitch with pups. Goats and pigs intrude from time to time. Lean dogs scavenge round the doorway. Naked little children whitened with dust play on the floor. A woman crouches over the cooking pot stirring the glutinous mass of corn meal. About sunset men are gathering in the council house to which their meals are sent.

They push forward the logs into the fire, throw their blankets around them and chatter until the women and children arrive with the evening meal. In the vicinity of the village, boys are wandering about with blunt wooden arrows fitted to their bowstrings, to be ready for the homeward flight of birds. Other boys are driving cattle to the kraal.

As darkness falls the long tubular drums are brought out. These are held between the legs and played in compound rhythm (Plate XXVII, Fig. 1). A shuffling dance begins, slowly at first, then with increasing vigor, to be continued far into the night.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

576 *konyimo oko* are spoken. The literal interpretation of these words is "back there." Ngonga says the words actually mean "excuse my back."

827 576 Spitting in the vicinity of the house of the king or of the chief is not allowed. "If you did that in the old days, you would have to pay something." Some people spit near the hearth in their own houses. A man who spits in the road is expected to cover the spittle. No person would spit in the presence of the chief or of the king. A hand should be placed in front of the mouth by a person who is coughing or sneezing.

576 [851] Shortly after the birth of a boy or girl all who are on good terms with the parents greet them by saying *kalunga*. The word is repeated four times with clapping of the palms. When words have been imperfectly heard and the listener desires repetition it is customary to say *kuku* in an interrogative tone.

[264] No particular etiquette is observed when eating. Two or three children eat from one platter, helping themselves with their fingers to the mush or sweet potatoes.

Rules forbidding the preparation of food by menstruating women, likewise prohibitions relating to stepping over a person, are mentioned in discussing taboos and omens.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF PLAY, MUSIC, AND DANCING

524 182 533 The educational value of play lies in its imitation of the pursuits of adult life. Though there are specialists in music, dancing, and singing, these exercises are indulged in by everyone. Music, singing, and dancing are more than amusements, they are fundamental as coordinating forces in tribal life at all levels of culture (W. D. Hambly, Tribal Dancing and Social Development, London, 1926). [113]

Among the Ovimbundu *Cimbamba Co Lia* is a popular game for girls, who form a circle, join hands, and sing:

PART I

524 [535] *Omola una, ndo sile vekango, Cimbamba co lia* ("That little child was left in the desert, the nighthawk ate it"). At the word *Cimbamba* they begin to dance, facing from side to side in such a manner that they meet and bow. Some sing, *Cimbamba co lia* ("The nighthawk ate him"), and others respond, *Kalikisi* ("'tis the goblins"), as many times as they wish. Finally a return is made to the first words which are sung again. All musical transcriptions have been made by Dr. G. Herzog from my phonographic records.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

cages and wooden animals to use as playthings. Girls mold small animals from clay. The bull-roarer is in use as a plaything at Elende. 524

There is a game of hide and seek for boys. A knife is hidden; then a boy who has been absent for a time enters the ring marked off for the game. His proximity to the knife is indicated by playing on a musical bow. There are taps on the instrument which mean that the knife is far away. On the contrary, when the searcher approaches the hidden knife, the boy with the bow plays a distinctive note, *yelula, yelula,* meaning "pick it up, pick it up."

Boys readily make a simple apparatus for playing a game of lassoing a hoop. A pliable branch is bent so as to form a circle, then the ends are lashed together with bark strips. The lasso is a piece of rattan or bark having at each end a corncob or a small stick three inches long. One boy bowls the hoop so that it passes in front of, and a few feet away from his opponent, who stands twenty-five feet distant. As the hoop passes in front of him, the boy throws his lasso in such a way that it twines round the hoop and brings it to the ground.

There are dances of many kinds, but Ngonga says that he would not know from the steps only what particular purpose the dance served. Several dances have been described, each in its appropriate section. There are no dances specially arranged to celebrate weddings or births. The funeral dance is described along with other ceremonies relating to interment. The medicine-man dances in connection with making rain or curing the sick. In order to say why the dance was being performed, it would be necessary to listen to the words of the songs; these are usually chanted in accompaniment to shuffling movements and the rhythm of drums. 535 [789]

Some of the older men and women perform dances and sing songs that are unknown to the younger generation. Dancing is in favor during the months of May and June because there are supplies of maize for making beer. As the dry season advances the maize formerly available for making beer is consumed as food, hence dancing is not so usual. Ngonga says that the old people know a dance which should be performed at new moon "so that there will be no sickness during this moon." Older men dance in commemoration of events during past wars, while women are spectators, and on these occasions there are beer-drinking and the slaughter of an ox. A group of men keeps up a shuffling dance while an old man relates a war story in a singsong voice. The oldest man is the first to cut the meat, after which each man helps himself. 535 527 [727]

535 Almost every evening one may hear the tapping of drums and the songs of dancers, because in addition to dances for a funeral or other special occasion there are ordinary dances of amusement in which lines of men and women advance and retreat, or men and women circle round the drums making arm movements accompanied by a swaying rhythm.

[243] The dance *onyaco*, performed in June when the corn is ripe, may have an ancient history and special significance as part of an agricultural rite. When corn is being stored the people sing, "There is grain in the house, may it never be out." There is no dance in [226] connection with fishing.

224 There is mimicry of animals in the hunting game played by boys. The frog, the leopard, and other animals are imitated in certain games, but I have no evidence of the performance of mimetic dances in relation to any cult for increasing the supply of animal life.

535 [534] The use of the small ball *ombunje* illustrates the way in which an apparent toy can be used in rites of a religious kind. *Ombunje* consists of a hard spherical fruit about six centimeters in diameter in which several hard seeds rattle. The sphere is covered with a layer of cloth over which lizard skin is stretched and sewn.

[769] [789] When the people wish to commemorate the death of a king, or when the king is sick, the medicine-man (*ocimbanda*) says that there must be *osaka* dancing. A strong man dances for many hours while holding this little ball in his outstretched hand. Other men who are dancing use their fists to hit the muscles of the outstretched arm in an attempt to make the holder drop the ball (*ombunje*). If he does so another man will promptly take hold of it. The precise nature of the endurance test is unexplained, but there is possibly the idea of giving strength to a sick king by this tension and endurance. My interpreter thought this was so, but could not explain why the dance should be performed to commemorate the death of a king. It would seem natural, however, to transfer the *ombunje* rite to a commemorative festival, if in the first place it was part of the last rites of a dying king.

534 463 There are among the Ovimbundu specialists in dancing, singing, and the playing of musical instruments. *Onjimbi* is the word for a singer of merit who starts the choruses. *Ocili* is a dancer of more than ordinary skill. When a man is required to play a drum or other instrument I have noticed that it is thought necessary to bring a specialist. There is no doubt that drumming requires special aptitude and practice. The man who plays the long drum is *usiki*, the drum

881 mony at which the older initiates dance while the novices clap their hands.

I witnessed the dance of initiated boys at Ngongo, where the [292] costumes resembled those I had seen at Katoko. At night a youth brought for me a set of initiation costumes (Plate LXXVIII, Fig. 1), which resembled those worn during the dance; this he did with great secrecy.

While at Ngalangi, the initiation of girls was investigated. After several days of negotiation with a village headman three female guardians of the girls came from the bush. The illustrations (Plate LXXVII, Figs. 1, 2) show the attitudes of these women and their decoration. There were three male drummers in the orchestra and several women, who sang and clapped their hands. On emerging from the bush the females moved toward the orchestra with their backs toward the players. As there were about two hundred yards to cover, this slow backward movement occupied a long time, since the three women did not take more than a few inches at each step. The dance [535] itself was a slow, shuffling, swaying movement, made while the bodies of the performers remained inclined forward and their heads were bent so that it was almost impossible to see their faces. The women wore no clothing except loin cloths. Each female was [302] plastered from head to foot with alternate bands of red and white clay smeared thickly. These three females are the women who act [864] as instructors for the girls during isolation in the bush where they receive sexual and domestic instruction.

881 The seclusion of girls covers a period of one month. During 304 this time the novices suffer no harsh treatment though an operation is performed, possibly excision of the clitoris, but I am not certain on this point. It was also stated that a corncob is introduced into the vagina. The tribe practising this ceremony for girls was the [171] Vanyemba, living close to the Ovimbundu at Ngongo near Ngalangi in central Angola.

881 In order to corroborate further the two accounts of initiation 171 ceremonies for boys I journeyed to Cangamba in Moxico, eastern 304 Angola. The position of the two first centers visited (Katoko and Ngongo) is on the border line where Ovimbundu and Vachokue mingle, and although there is a mixture of these and other tribes at Cangamba, the culture, language, and physique of the Vachokue predominate. A description of the circumcision ceremonies witnessed at Cangamba is given below for comparison with the accounts resulting from visits to Katoko and Ngongo.

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30)1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

At Caconda I obtained the basket of a medicine-man which contained 759
a human tibia, a hoe for digging in graves, and a round stone for pounding 791
the bone before mixing it with fat and charcoal. Medicine-men still make potions for internal use, and these are usually carried in small horns suspended round the neck, or the paste may be contained in the carapace of a tortoise. In every way the medicine-man is still functioning, and his tasks are fundamental to the social and religious life of the Ovimbundu.

At an early age children specialize in their play which has a bearing 868
on the business of life. Boys make wooden-tipped arrows, play at hunting, and shoot at tubers which are rolled along the ground. Girls take clay from the potters to fabricate their own small cooking pots, and young girls attempt the coiling of basketry.

Men are the musicians, and among these a high degree of specialization 533
is observed. In a large village there are likely to be only a few competent drummers, and only a few men who play the small iron-keyed instrument called ocisanji. Osaka is a ritual game played only by men, and only when a village headman or a king is dying. The ball (ombunje) is made by sewing 535
lizard skin over a hard spherical fruit about six centimeters in diameter. A 524
man continues to dance with this little ball clenched in his outstretched 755
hand, while another dancer hits the muscles of his arm to make him release the ball. This game is thought to give strength to the sick man. There is a transfer of the endurance of the dancers to the invalid.

Preliminary observation in some villages occupied by Ovimbundu is 197
disappointing in its suggestion of Europeanization. The foreign culture is, however, a thin veneer, and further research shows a strong persistence of indigenous custom and belief quite near to centers of Portuguese influence.

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